

PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATES

THE FIRST 15 YEARS



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176 OF THE WORLD'S
MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN



PLAYBOY'S PLAYMATES

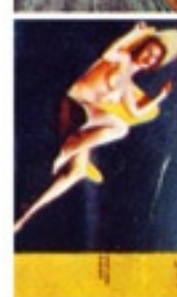
THE FIRST 15 YEARS



She's been called "the nude next door," "the girl with the staple in her navel," "the most successful continuing feature in the history of magazines"—and a few less complimentary things by the more puritanical members of our society—but for 30 years she has reigned supreme. PLAYBOY's Playmate of the Month: the epitome of beauty. The Playmate really represents the ideal American girl—keeping in mind, of course, that in America's melting-pot tradition that ideal girl may well have been born in another country. Our gatefold attractions have come to us from such diverse birthplaces as Norway and Malta. The thousands of letters these girls receive each month, from readers all over the world, seem to bear out the belief that the Playmate is what guys would like *their* girls to look like. Interestingly, in recent years she's become what other *girls* would like to look like, too. And, best of all, the Playmate is real: a live, approachable, genuine girl.

The pinup girl, who brightened barracks and cheered up the loneliest of outposts for homesick G.I.s in World War Two, was perhaps the closest ancestor of today's Playmate. Unlike the traditional nude or seminude of painting or of art photography, the pinup had an identity. She was Betty Grable peeking over her shoulder in a snug, one-piece bathing suit; Rita Hayworth in a black, lace-topped negligee; Esther Williams rising from the water like some latter-day Venus, rather better endowed than Botticelli's; exotic Hedy Lamarr; Sweater Girl Lana Turner, so named because of the obvious bruising her two-sizes-too-small pullovers took from her bosom; Jane Russell, her even more lavish assets emphasized by a bra specially engineered for her by Howard Hughes. The movie-star pinups were instantly recognizable. They were real girls; you could write to them, and you might get an autographed picture in return. But chances were you'd never meet one, certainly not in the neighborhood grocery store.

The pinup craze waned slightly after the war, when guys no longer had to make do with paper dolls on Quonset-hut walls. But the arrival of the Fifties brought even more strikingly sensuous screen personalities: smoldering Ava Gardner, prettily pouting Brigitte Bardot, coolly sexy Kim Novak, child star grown up—very obviously—Liz Taylor,





and, above all, Marilyn Monroe. Which brings us up to the time we were getting the first issue of PLAYBOY together.

The one movie actress of the Fifties who most outstandingly personified the natural, sexy look was Marilyn. She had scored as an actress with her appearance in *The Asphalt Jungle* and was fast becoming a superstar. Even more public interest was being generated by the revelation that, back in 1949, before she became well known, Marilyn had posed for some nude calendar shots. In 1953, that was something of a *cause célèbre*. The calendar received all kinds of publicity, but few people had seen it.

Actually, photographer Tom Kelley had made two nude shots of Monroe; one, the poorer one, had been reproduced in a miniature two-color cut in *Life*. John Baumgarth, who had a calendar company in a Chicago suburb, owned the other pose, and Hugh Hefner went out to see him. A deal was made that same day; for \$500, Baumgarth gave PLAYBOY the rights to the Monroe picture and, for good measure, threw in the color separation plates. Hef also signed a year's contract to buy 11 more nude photos from Baumgarth—at \$300 each—and PLAYBOY's most popular feature was off and running.

We didn't call Marilyn the Playmate of the Month; she was our "Sweetheart of the Month." We put an announcement on the cover: "FIRST TIME in any magazine FULL COLOR the famous MARILYN MONROE NUDE." That got attention. Our first issue achieved real notice: All of the 70,000 copies distributed were bought by an eager public.

The next several Playmates—that title took over in our second (January 1954) issue—were simply other calendar poses from the Baumgarth company. The pictures were enlarged, from a single-page photo to a double-page spread, but they were unidentified. In December of that year, we tried a six-page layout, *Photographing a Playmate*, in which we followed model Terry Ryan through the process of disrobing, applying makeup, posing, and so forth. The letters that came to us following that feature were different. Guys seemed hopeful, somehow, of meeting Terry. She was more to them than just a pinup. We still didn't realize where all this was leading.

The real breakthrough in the Playmate concept came in July 1955, when we featured our Office Playmate, Janet Pilgrim. Janet worked in PLAYBOY's subscription department. With the publication of her Playmate story, the mail started to roll in as never before. We had hit upon the true import of today's Playmate idea. This beautiful girl, this Playmate, might be someone you could meet anywhere—in your office or at a hardware store, on the tennis court or in your doctor's waiting room. She could be the girl next door and, therefore, she might be attainable. It was a whole new thing.



Janet Pilgrim appeared on the centerfold three times: in July and December 1955 and October 1956. She is the only three-time Playmate in PLAYBOY's history. She still gets fan mail.

Janet was the first Playmate found in PLAYBOY's offices, but not the only one. Judy Lee Tomerlin (June 1958), Joni Mattis (November 1960) and Lannie Balcom (August 1965) were discovered right here at home.

Some of our Playmates have attracted unusual reader interest. In October 1955, we had trouble deciding between two Playmate candidates and showed both of them to readers before giving the title to one, Jean Moorehead. At the insistence of irate fans, we named the other girl, Jonnie Nicely, our Playmate for August 1956. October seems to be our month for seeing double. After the aforementioned episode in October 1955, we actually split the crown between two Playmates, Pat Sheehan and Mara Corday, in October 1958. DeDe Lind, a blonde and freckled Miss August 1967, has drawn more fan mail than any other Playmate—more than 1600 letters at last count.

Barbara Cameron, the United Air Lines stewardess we met in a hi-fi shop—an event chronicled in our November 1955 Playmate feature—was the first of many high-flying girls who've graced our centerfolds. Our first aspiring television actress—and first girl to appear on a triple-page Playmate foldout—was March 1956's selection, Marian Stafford. In July of that year, we had a talented authoress—and our first Phi Beta Kappa—as our Playmate; Alice Denham's story, *The Deal*, appeared in the same issue as her gatefold.

We ran into our first major problem with our January 1958 selection, Elizabeth Ann Roberts—who turned out to be under 18. Despite the fact that her mother had consented to her appearance in PLAYBOY, we were hauled into court by overzealous authorities. The case was dismissed, but we have since been extremely careful to check aspiring Playmates' birth certificates.

With the opening in February 1960 of the Chicago Playboy Club, the first in the chain of Playboy Clubs, came a whole new field for Playmate selection: our own Playboy Bunnies. Over the years, the Playmate-Bunny traffic has flowed both ways: Bunnies become Playmates, and Playmates become Bunnies. The first Playmate to become a Bunny was December 1956's Lisa Winters, one of several Playmates shot for us by Bunny Yeager, a crackerjack woman photographer whose name is merely a coincidence. The first Playmate to be discovered while wearing Bunny ears and tail at the Club was Jan Roberts, Miss August 1962. Sixty-six of the ladies featured in this volume have borne the double title of Playmate-Bunny. The symbiosis was so complete that Jo Collins, Miss December 1964, became





Playmate-Bunny Promotion Manager.

Over the years, our Playmates have mirrored the society around them, with its changing lifestyles. We've had beatniks and sky divers, health-food fanatics and ballerinas, secretaries and schoolteachers, motorcycle enthusiasts and homebodies—even one meatcutter.

Many Playmates have gone on to show-biz careers, abetted by their PLAYBOY appearances. Jayne Mansfield was the earliest example. Her February 1955 Playmate appearance was without fanfare, but that exposure helped her win a movie role and she went on to stardom. She also starred in a number of major pictorials in the magazine over the next several years.

Stella Stevens landed significant television roles and her fan mail went up 1000 percent after her January 1960 Playmate appearance.

Donna Michelle, Miss December 1963, made her movie debut opposite another newcomer, Warren Beatty, in a film titled *Mickey One*. Donna eventually found the other side of the camera more interesting. We published some of her photography in *Donna Clicks*, an April 1974 pictorial.

Other Hollywood discoveries first displayed on PLAYBOY's centerfolds during the first 15 years have included Joyce Nizzari (December 1958), China Lee (August 1964), Astrid Schulz (September 1964), Jo Collins, Susan Denberg (August 1966), Anne Randall (May 1967), Victoria Vetri (who took the name Angela Dorian for her Playmate appearance in September 1967), Connie Kreski (January 1968) and Cynthia Myers (December 1968).

PLAYBOY's Playmates are celebrities, so it is no surprise that they often marry celebrities. Elsa Sorensen, first on a long list of Scandinavian imports, was our September 1956 Playmate. She later married singer Guy Mitchell. Pat Sheehan married Bing Crosby's son Dennis. Joyce Nizzari married actor Jack Hogan. Christa Speck (September 1961) married producer Marty Krofft. China Lee married comedian Mort Sahl. Jo Collins married baseball star Bo Belinsky. British Bunny-turned-Playmate Dolly Read (May 1966) wed Dick Martin of *Laugh-In* fame.

The Playmate has become known the world over as the living embodiment of the beautiful woman. In this book, you'll meet—or renew your acquaintance with—the first 176 beauties who appeared on our centerfolds during the magazine's first 15 years. A second volume, covering the period from 1969 through 1983, will follow.





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PLAYBOY PRESS







MARGIE HARRISON, January 1954 and June 1954

TERRY RYAN, December 1954



MARGARET SCOTT, February 1954

MADELINE CASTLE, October 1954







JOANNE ARNOLD, May 1954

JACKIE RAINBOW,
September 1954



DIANE HUNTER, November 1954



NEVA GILBERT, July 1954

ARLINE HUNTER, August 1954





DOLORES DEL MONTE, March 1954





JEAN MOOREHEAD, October 1955



ANNE FLEMING, September 1955

JANET PILGRIM, July 1955, December 1955 and October 1956





MARGUERITE EMPEY, May 1955 and February 1956

BETTIE PAGE, January 1955



EVE MEYER, June 1955



PAT LAWLER, August 1955



BARBARA CAMERON, November 1955



JAYNE MANSFIELD, February 1955





LISA WINTERS, December 1956



ELSA SORENSEN, September 1956



MARION SCOTT, May 1956



JONNIE NICELY, August 1956



RUSTY FISHER, April 1956



BETTY BLUE, November 1956



GLORIA WALKER, June 1956



ALICE DENHAM, July 1956



LYNN TURNER, January 1956



MARIAN STAFFORD, March 1956



LINDA VARGAS, December 1957

GLORIA WINDSOR, April 1957



JEAN JANI, July 1957



MARLENE CALLAHAN, November 1957



DAWN RICHARD, May 1957

JUNE BLAIR, January 1957



SALLY TODD, February 1957



CARRIE RADISON, June 1957

SANDRA EDWARDS, March 1957



JACQUELYN PRESCOTT, September 1957



COLLEEN FARRINGTON, October 1957



DOLORES DONLON, August 1957



ELIZABETH ANN ROBERTS, January 1958



TERI HOPE, September 1958

LARI LAINE, May 1958







JOAN STALEY, November 1958

MARA CORDAY, October 1958





LINNÉ NANETTE AHLSTRAND, July 1958



JUDY LEE TOMERLIN, June 1958



CHERYL KUBERT, February 1958





MYRNA WEBER, August 1958

FELICIA ATKINS, April 1958



JOYCE NIZZARI, December 1958







MARILYN HANOLD, June 1959



YVETTE VICKERS, July 1959



ELEANOR BRADLEY, February 1959

VIRGINIA GORDON, January 1959







NANCY CRAWFORD, April 1959



CINDY FULLER, May 1959



AUDREY DASTON, March 1959

MARIANNE GABA, September 1959



CLAYRE PETERS, August 1959









CAROL EDEN, December 1960



GINGER YOUNG, May 1960





TEDDI SMITH (Delilah Henry), July 1960

SUSIE SCOTT, February 1960





STELLA STEVENS, January 1960

DELORES WELLS, June 1960



SALLY SARELL, March 1960



KATHY DOUGLAS, October 1960





ANNE DAVIS, September 1960

ELAINE PAUL, August 1960





HEIDI BECKER, June 1961



DIANNE DANFORD, November 1961



BARBARA ANN LAWFORD, February 1961





SUSAN KELLY, May 1961



NANCY NIELSEN, April 1961



SHERALEE CONNERS, July 1961



TONYA CREWS, March 1961





CHRISTA SPECK, September 1961

LYNN KARROL, December 1961



JEAN CANNON, October 1961



CONNIE COOPER, January 1961



KAREN THOMPSON, August 1961

UNNE TERJESEN, July 1962



KARI KNUDSEN, February 1962



MERLE PERTILE, January 1962



ROBERTA LANE, April 1962



AVIS KIMBLE, November 1962







MARYA CARTER, May 1962

MICKEY WINTERS, September 1962



JAN ROBERTS, August 1962



PAMELA ANNE GORDON, March 1962



LAURA YOUNG, October 1962



MERISSA MATHES, June 1962





CHRISTINE WILLIAMS, October 1963





ADRIENNE MOREAU, March 1963



TONI ANN THOMAS, February 1963

TERRE TUCKER, November 1963





CONNIE MASON, June 1963



CARRIE ENWRIGHT, July 1963



PHYLLIS SHERWOOD, August 1963



VICTORIA VALENTINO, September 1963



JUDI MONTEREY, January 1963



SANDRA SETTANI, April 1963



SHARON CINTRON, May 1963



MELBA OGLE, July 1964





KAI BRENDLINGER, November 1964





TERRI KIMBALL, May 1964



ROSEMARIE HILLCREST, October 1964

LORI WINSTON, June 1964







NANCY SCOTT, March 1964



ASTRID SCHULZ, September 1964







NANCY JO HOOPER, February 1964

ASHLYN MARTIN, April 1964



DINAH WILLIS, December 1965





SUE WILLIAMS, April 1965

GAY COLLIER, July 1965











SALLY DUBERSON, January 1965

HEDY SCOTT, June 1965







LANNIE BALCOM, August 1965



MARIA MCBANE, May 1965





SUSAN DENBERG, August 1966



KELLY BURKE, June 1966



JUDY TYLER, January 1966

TISH HOWARD, July 1966





LISA BAKER, November 1966



PRISCILLA WRIGHT, March 1966





DIANNE CHANDLER, September 1966



LINDA MOON, October 1966

KARLA CONWAY, April 1966







DOLLY READ, May 1966

ANNE RANDALL, May 1967





HEATHER RYAN, July 1967



KAYA CHRISTIAN, November 1967





REAGAN WILSON, October 1967

DEDE LIND, August 1967



GWEN WONG, April 1967

JOEY GIBSON, June 1967



KIM FARBER, February 1967

ANGELA DORIAN (Victoria Vetri), September 1967





LYNN WINCHELL, December 1967

FRAN GERARD, March 1967



CONNIE KRESKI, January 1968



PAIGE YOUNG, November 1968



GALE OLSON, August 1968



MICHELLE HAMILTON, March 1968









ELIZABETH JORDAN, May 1968

NANCY HARWOOD, February 1968



DRU HART, September 1968



BRITT FREDRIKSEN, June 1968



MELODYE PRENTISS, July 1968



GAYE RENNIE, April 1968





CYNTHIA MYERS, December 1968

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